

REMARKS

Applicant's attorney wishes to thank the Examiner and his Primary for the courteous and helpful interview of March 14, 2002 during which the present amendments to the claims and the prior art were discussed.

Claims 1-3 and new dependent Claim 19, to a specific embodiment, are the only claims being prosecuted in this application. Claims 12-18, which are now the subject of a divisional application, have been canceled.

Claim 1, as now amended, is to a workpiece-transfer device for loading a material workpiece in a workpiece-machining device and unloading a machined product workpiece from the workpiece-machining device. The workpiece-transfer device includes a movement means with a rectangular coordinate system for moving a traveling body in a first horizontal direction along the direction in which the workpiece-machining device and a workpiece-storage device stand, at one side of the workpiece-machining device in a line as well as in a second horizontal direction orthogonal to the first horizontal direction. The traveling body includes a gripping means for gripping a material or product workpiece, and the workpiece-storage device includes a product-housing section arranged for stacking of machined product workpieces and a material-housing section arranged for stacking of material workpieces provided in parallel, on the one side, in the second direction. Such an arrangement is not taught or suggested in the references cited.

Serial No. **09/400,833**
Preliminary Amendment

Reconsideration and removal of the rejection of Applicant's claims under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as anticipated by Clark (U.S. 4,709,605) and by Lockert (U.S. 5,244,343) are respectfully requested in view of the present amendment to Claim 1 and the following remarks.

In the Final Office Action dated December 26, 2001, in rejecting Claims 1-3, it was alleged that Clark shows a workpiece-transfer device, a workpiece-machining device 13, a traveling body, a first direction X and second direction Y, a product housing section 51 and material housing section 50. The housing sections 51 and 50, however, are located at the front of and on opposite sides of the machining device 13. As stated at col. 7, lines 8-12:

"...an automatic workpiece-loading device or magazine is positioned adjacent one side of the worktable 15 and a workpiece stacking device on magazine 51 is positioned adjacent the other side of the worktable 15."

The movement of the workpiece is in a single direction from 50 to 15 to 51, not in two directions as is in the present application. In Clark, there is no product-housing section 21 and material-housing section 22 as a single workpiece-storage device 2, since Clark's sections 51 and 50 are on opposite sides of the worktable 15.

Claims 1 and 2 were also rejected in the Final Office Action on the basis of Lockert, it being alleged that Lockert shows a workpiece-transfer device, a material workpiece, a workpiece-machining device 131, a machined product workpiece, movement means traveling in two directions and a product housing section and material-housing section. Again, as shown in the plan view of Figure 1 of Lockert, while two stackers 13 and 14 are provided, they are on opposite sides of a

Serial No. 09/400,833
Preliminary Amendment

workpiece-machining device 131. There is no product-housing section 21 and material-housing section 22 as a single workpiece-storage device 2.

By providing the workpiece-storage device as a product-housing section and a material-housing section in parallel at one side of the workpiece-machining device, and in a second direction, orthogonal to a first direction in which a workpiece-machining device and the workpiece-storage device are positioned, the present claimed arrangement provides for a square-shaped layout of the entire facility and provides more effective use of the floor area of a manufacturing site.

This is quite removed from the in-line arrangement of the Clark and Lockert equipment.

In view of the present amendment to Claim 1 and the above remarks, and as agreed upon at the interview of March 14, 2002, Applicant's claims 1-3 and 19 are believed to be patentable over the references cited and early allowance thereof is respectfully requested.

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the specification and claims by the current amendment. The attached page is captioned "**Version with markings to show changes made.**"

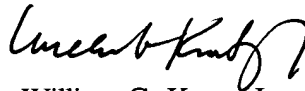
If, for any reason, it is felt that this application is not now in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact Applicant's undersigned attorney at the telephone number indicated below to arrange for an interview to expedite the disposition of this case.

Serial No. 09/400,833
Preliminary Amendment

In the event that this paper is not timely filed, Applicant respectfully petitions for an appropriate extension of time. The fees for such an extension or any other fees which may be due with respect to this paper, may be charged to Deposit Account No. 01-2340.

Respectfully submitted,

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Enclosure: Version with Markings to Show Changes Made
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Serial No. 09/400,833
Preliminary Amendment

VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend Claim 1, as follows:

1. (Twice Amended) A workpiece-transfer device for loading a material workpiece in a workpiece-machining device and unloading a machined product workpiece from the workpiece-machining device, characterized in that the workpiece-transfer device includes a movement means with a rectangular coordinate system for moving a traveling body in a first horizontal direction along the direction in which the workpiece-machining device and a workpiece-storage device stand, at one side of the workpiece-machining device in a line as well as in a second horizontal direction orthogonal to the first horizontal direction, and in that said traveling body includes a gripping means for gripping a material or product workpiece, wherein said workpiece-storage device includes a product-housing section arranged for stacking of machined product workpieces and a material-housing section arranged for stacking of material workpieces provided in parallel, on said one side, in said second direction.